

DEPICTIONS OF VIRTUES AND VICES AS MNEMONIC DEVICES

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Date of receipt: 11th of March, 2016

Final date of acceptance: 13th of September, 2016

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to explore the reach of mnemonics practices and the idea of mental images in illuminated manuscripts, specifically in five illuminated manuscripts of the *Psychomachia* that are dated between the 9th and 10th century. During the Middle Ages, mnemonics were a key point for learning. Many Literature scholars have studied the relationship between mnemonics and virtues and vices, and how mental images of these allegories aided the memory. Within the monastic culture, the mental images of the virtues and vices helped monks to learn and memorize the moral teachings of the Church. It suggests that the illuminations in these five manuscripts were meant as mnemonics devices for the monks, especially those that could not read at all.

KEYWORDS

Virtues and Vices, Psychomachia, Mnemonics, Learning, Monks.

CAPITALIA VERBA

Virtutes et Vitia, Psycmachia, Mnemonicum, Disciplina, Monachi.

1. *Psychomachia* manuscripts

Aurelius Prudentius Clemens' literary works were done between the years 392 and 405.¹ These were so famous that as early as the 5th century around all Europe copies of them circulated. Today more than 300 manuscripts with Prudentius' works survived in different libraries and collections of the European continent.² Due the extensive popularity of the *Psychomachia*, this is the work with the most surviving copies. It includes the oldest Prudentius manuscript, a 6th century copy today in the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* (Ms. Lat. 8084), and 20 illuminated examples. These illustrated codices are dated between the late 9th century and late 13th century but many scholars agreed that as early as the 5th century illustrated copies of the *Psychomachia* where available.³

The aim of this paper is to study the relationship between the illuminations of the *Psychomachia* manuscripts and some mnemonic practices. To analyze this relationship five specific Prudentiu's manuscripts of the twenty surviving were chosen: 1) Manuscripts, Ms. 10066-77 and 2) Manuscripts, Ms. 9987-91 in the *Bibliothèque royale de Belgique*; 3) Codice, Cod. 264 of the *Burgerbibliothek Bern*; 4) Manuscripts, Mss. Burm. Q.3 in *Bibliotheek der Universiteit de Leiden* and 5) Manuscripts Latin, Ms. Lat. 8085 of the *Bibliothèque nationale de France*. The reason for selecting the manuscripts is because they share some particular characteristics that have been studied by Richard Stettiner and Helen Woodruff, such as the fact that they were created in scriptoriums of important abbeys and monasteries of the Meuse Valley and then Rhine River zone, they are the oldest surviving examples (dated between the 9th and 10th centuries), and they have a substantial number of glosses. Thus, the fact that they have the greatest number of figures of all the *Psychomachia*, including an effigy of the author and the subtitles explaining all the images, is something that has caught our attention for this research.

Thanks to Richard Stettiner's catalog and stemma, the provenance and origin of these manuscripts are well known (Illustrations 23, 24). Stettiner divided the surviving illustrated manuscripts in two groups: Group I has eight manuscripts of French and Anglo-Saxon origin. On the other side of the stemma it is Group II, formed by twelfth codices which were illustrated around the zone of the Rhine River and the Meuse Valley and are directly related to Carolingian abbeys and monasteries. The manuscripts with illustrated copies of the *Psychomachia* also have other Prudentius' works, but most of the illuminations belong to the *Battle of the Soul*. Many scholars who had studied these manuscripts have kept Stettiner's classification and division.

1. Prudencio Clemente, Aurelio. *Obras Completas de Aurelio Prudencio*, ed. and trans. Alfonso Ortega, Isidoro Rodríguez. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1981: 29.

2. Haworth, Kenneth R. *Deified Virtues, Demonic Vices, and Descriptive Allegory in Prudentius' Psychomachia*. Amsterdam: A.M. Hakkert, 1980: 1; Rodríguez, Isidoro. "Introducción general", *Obras Completas de Aurelio Prudencio*, ed. and trans. Alfonso Ortega, Isidoro Rodríguez. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1981: 66.

3. Stettiner, Richard. *Die Illustrierten Prudentiushandschriften*. Berlin: Druck von J.S. Preuss, 1895; Mâle, Émile. *El arte religioso del siglo XIII en Francia: el Gótico*. Madrid: Encuentro, 2001; Woodruff, Helen. "The Illustrated Manuscripts of Prudentius". *Art Studies*, 7 (1929): 31-79; Katzenellenbogen, Adolf. *Allegories of the Virtues and Vices in Mediaeval Art, from Early Christian Times to the Thirteenth Century*. New York: W.N. Norton & Company, Inc., 1964.



1.1 Leiden, *Bibliotheek der Universiteit. Ms. Burm. Q.3. Stettiner Le*²

Manuscript Burm.Q.3, has 181 folios written in one column. It measures 24,4 cm x 15 cm and it contains different works dated between the 9th and the 10th century. It begins with a grammar treatise (*Tractatus ad grammaticam*) ff. 1v-8v., which according to Stettiner was added later.⁴ The rest of the manuscript is comprised by a 9th century compilation of Prudentius' works. (f. 9) *Preface*, (ff. 10r-29r, 83v- 88r) *Cathemerinon*, (ff. 29v-83v) *Peristephanon*, (ff. 88v-105r) *Apotheosis*, (ff. 105r-119v) *Hamartigenia*, (ff. 120r-149v) *Psychomachia*, (ff. 150r-178r) *Contra Symmachum*, (ff. 178v-181v) *Dittochaeum*. The entire *Psychomachia* poem is illuminated; it has 80 miniatures in two colors which were arranged within the columns, following the text and a *tituli* describing the image. This is one of the oldest manuscripts, dated at the end of the 9th century. Tracing its provenance is quite difficult. According to Stettiner it is from the Egmond Abbey, Helen Woodruff ties it to the School of Reims, Adolf Katzenellenbogen to the North of France, from the Abbey of Saint Amand. Recent information states that the manuscript was created in the second quarter of the 9th century in Saint Denis and later on it was taken to the Egmond Abbey.⁵ It is quite probable that the codex was made in Saint Denis due the fact that it was not until the 10th century that the Egmond Abbey was founded. Its style resembles that of the Utrecht Psalter.⁶

1.2 Paris, *Bibliothèque nationale de France. Ms. Lat. 8085. Stettiner P*²

Manuscript Latin 8085 has 82 folios written in two columns which measure 21cm x 17 cm. This codex also contains different works by Prudentius: (ff. 3r-11r, 37v-40r) *Cathemerinon*, (ff. 11r-37v) *Peristephanon*, (ff. 40r-48r) *Apotheosis*, (ff. 48r-55r) *Hamartigenia*, (ff. 55v-70r) *Psychomachia*, (ff. 70r-82v) *Contra Symmachum*. The *Psychomachia* contains 80 miniatures in colors arranged within the text columns. Each miniature has a *tituli* describing it. Richard Stettiner and Helen Woodruff dated it in the late 9th century, recent information from the *Bibliothèque nationale* dates it between the last third of the 9th century, 870-899. Even though experts recognized three different hands, it was created in the same scriptorium. It is related to the School of Reim and its style is very close to the Douce Psalter.

4. Stettiner, Richard. *Die Illustrierten Prudentiushandschriften...*: 33.

5. Bergmann, Rolf. *Katalog der althochdeutschen und altsächsischen Glossenhandschriften*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005: I, 363; Bischoff, Bernhard. *Katalog der festländischen Handschriften des neunten Jahrhunderts: (mit Ausnahme der wisigotischen)*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004: II, 47 (Teil II: Laon-Paderborn).

6. Woodruff, Helen. "The Illustrated Manuscripts of Prudentius...": 52.



1.3 Brussels, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique. Ms. 9987-91. Stettiner B¹

Codex 9987-91 has 157 folios which approximately measure 24 cm x 16 cm. Most of the texts are written in one column, except for some folios which are written in two columns. The manuscript contains six Prudentius' works: (ff. 1r-17r, 64r-66v) *Cathemerinon*, (ff. 17r-63v) *Peristephanon*, (ff. 66v-83v) *Apotheosis*, (ff. 83v-99v) *Hamartigenia*, (ff. 100r-129r) *Psychomachia*, (ff. 130r-157v) *Contra Symmachum*. The *Psychomachia* poem is illustrated with 80 images depicting the different verses. These also have a *tituli* explaining the miniatures. Even though Stettiner and Woodruff stayed that is a 10th century manuscript, Katzenellenbogen and recent information from the *Bibliothèque royale de Belgique* dates it to the second half of the 9th century, to the Abbey of Saint-Amand.⁷

1.4 Brussels, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique. Ms. 10066-77. Stettiner B.

This manuscript contains 157 folios which measure 25,5 cm x 17,5 cm. It includes different texts from the 10th century to the 14th century. The 10th century texts are: (ff. 112r-139r) Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, (ff. 140r-156v) *Physiologus*, (f. 157r) Gerbertus Aureliacensis' *Commentary on Boethius' Arithmetica*, (f. 161r) Boethius' *Commentarius in Ciceronis Topica*, and (ff. 139v, 161v-162r) some grammatical notes. Some of the 12th century texts are: (ff. 4v-65r) Solinus' *Collectanea rerum memorabilium*, (ff. 85v-86r) Glosses to Prudentius *Psychomachia*, (ff. 80r-85r) some word lists Hebrew-Latin and Greek-Latin, and a (ff. 89r-111v) Biblical glossary. The manuscript has many miniatures which correspond to Prudentius' *Psychomachia* and the *Physiologus*. The *Psychomachia* has about 52 miniatures and the figure cycle is incomplete, when compared with the 9th century manuscripts. Also there are many blank spaces between verses that probably were meant to include a miniature. The *Psychomachia* is the oldest text of the codex, dated to the 10th century. However, its provenance is quite blurry. The *Bibliothèque royale* links its origin to the Meuse region. At some point it belonged to the Abbey of Saint Laurent in Liège.

1.5 Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Cod. 264. Stettiner Be

This manuscript has 145 folios which approximately measure 27,3 cm x 21 cm. It contains all Prudentius' works: (ff. 2r-2v) *Praefatio*, (ff. 3r-17v) *Cathemerinon*,

7. Bergmann, Rolf. *Katalog der althochdeutschen und altsächsischen Glossenhandschriften...*: I, 287-288; Bischoff, Bernhard. *Katalog der festländischen Handschriften des neunten Jahrhunderts: (mit Ausnahme der wisigotischen)*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998 : I, 159 (Teil I: Aachen-Lambach); Bibliothèque royale de Belgique. "Prudentius, Carmina". *Bibliothèque numérique de la Bibliothèque royale de Belgique*. 7 November 2013 <http://belgica.kbr.be/fr/coll/ms/ms9987_91_fr.html>; Katzenellenbogen, Adolf. *Allegories of the Virtues and Vices in Mediaeval Art...*: 4.

(ff. 20r-28v, 50r-74v) *Peristephanon*, (ff. 31r-48v) *Psychomachia*, (ff. 76r-80r) *Dittochaeon*, (ff. 118r-145r) *Contra Symmachum*. Some miniatures depict the lives of saint Romanus and saint Cassianus in the *Peristephanon*. Regarding the *Psychomachia* miniatures, it has 38. The cycle is incomplete, comparing it with the 9th century codices. It is dated around the 900 to the region of the Lake Constance, probably from Saint Gall or Reichenau.⁸

These five codices belong to Group II, which means that they belonged to monasteries between the zone of the Rhine River and the Meuse Valley. Also they are the oldest surviving examples of both groups, dated between the 9th and 10th century. Aside from these common points, they also share the fact that are the copies with the most substantial number of miniatures, including an effigy of the author (four of them have two), and all the figures have a *titulus* which describe them and between the text and the images they are a lot of glosses in vernacular.⁹ The manuscripts of Group II style resemble that of the Utrecht Psalter and the School of Reims.¹⁰

These manuscripts were copied and illustrated in different monasteries and abbeys of the geographical zones mentioned above. There are some discrepancies surrounding the origin of the manuscripts. Regardless this, more or less, it can be stated that these codices were created and used in abbeys and important intellectual centers with big scriptoriums such as Saint Gall, Saint Amand, Saint Laurent and even Saint Denis. The literary and pictorial works were meant to be seen by certain spectators. Even though it was common between monasteries to lend and exchange manuscripts, the public and the use of the works were the same, a private one: the monks and religious men of the monastic community that they belonged.

8. Utz, Sabine. "Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Cod. 264-Prudentius Carmina". *e-codices - Virtual Manuscript Library of Switzerland*. 18 November 2014 <<http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/bbb/0264>>; Utz, Sabine. "Reprise et réinvention des manuscrits antiques à l'époque carolingienne: l'exemple du Prudence de la Burgerbibliothek de Berne (Codex 264)", *Actualiser le passé: figures antiques du Moyen Âge à la Renaissance*, Jean-Claude Mühlethaler, Delphine Burghgraeve, eds. Laussane: Université de Laussane, 2012: 34; Bergmann, Rolf. *Katalog der althochdeutschen und altsächsischen Glossenhandschriften...*: I, 260; Bischoff, Bernhard. *Katalog der festländischen Handschriften des neunten Jahrhunderts: (mit Ausnahme der wisigotischen)...*: I, 120; Woodruff, Helen. "The Illustrated Manuscripts of Prudentius...": 43; Stettiner, Richard. *Die Illustrierten Prudentiushandschriften...*: 88-96.

9. Sinea O'Sullivan analyzes the vernacular glosses in some of these manuscripts. O'Sullivan, Sinéad. *Early Medieval Glosses on Prudentius' Psychomachia: The Weitz Tradition*. Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2004.

10. Woodruff, Helen. "The Illustrated Manuscripts of Prudentius...": 51.



2. Monasteries: the place of literate, illiterate and semi-literate

2.1 Monastic schools: the teaching of grammar and rhetoric

These five codices were created in important *scriptoria* or used in important monasteries related to the Carolingian world, such as the abbeys of Saint-Denis, Saint-Amand, Saint-Laurent and Saint-Gall. Even though manuscript Lat. 8085 is related to the School of Reims which operated within the Cathedral, this can be linked to the abbey of Saint-Remi in Reims. This abbey was an episcopal one, and from the 8th century till the 10th its abbot was the Bishop of Reims.¹¹ Saint-Remi close ties to the bishopric of Reims gained it the name of *Monastère de Reims*.¹² All these monasteries at some point of their histories adopted the Benedictine rule and also promoted the Carolingian Renaissance. These abbeys in general had the favor of the monarchy, especially between the 8th and the 10th centuries. During the 8th century, thanks to Charlemagne's *Admonitio Generalis*, through all the Carolingian empire schools were established in the monasteries to teach the psalms, grammar, calculus and music, and these abbeys were not an exception. In these schools were created to thought the infant oblates and the sons of nobles.¹³ Saint Gall even had two schools, one where the novices and oblates were taught and the other where laymen of high rank, Illustrations secular priest and the sons of wealthy nobles were educated.¹⁴ After gaining the basic education, novices continue studying under their master's guidance. The teachers of these abbeys were considered scholars.¹⁵ They visited the different abbeys to gain new knowledge and many times became the *magister* of advanced subjects.¹⁶

The general curriculum consisted of the disciplines of the *trivium* and *quadrivium* and its relation to the study of scripture. But before learning the subjects which composed the liberal arts, the students had to learn by heart the elements of the faith: the creed, the *Pater Noster* and the Psalms. They learned these through the act of repetition: the

11. Prache, Anne. *Saint-Remi de Reims: l'oeuvre de Pierre de Celle et sa place dans l'architecture gothique*. Geneva: Droz, 1978: 10.

12. Poussin, Clovis. *Monographie de l'abbaye et de l'église de St-Remi de Reims, précédée d'une notice sur le saint apôtre des Francs d'après Flodoard*. Reims: Lemoine-Canart, 1857: 52.

13. Platelle, Henri. *Le temporel de l'abbaye de Saint-Amand des origines à 1340*. Paris: Librairie d'Argences, 1962: 65-66; Clark, James Midgley. *The Abbey of St. Gall as a Centre of Literature and Art*. Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 1926: 8; D'Ayzac, Félicie-Marie-Emilie. *Histoire de l'abbaye de Saint-Denis en France. Tome Premier*. Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1860: 13-15; Félibien, Michel. *Histoire de l'abbaye royale de Saint-Denis en France: contenant la vie des abbez qui l'ont gouvernée depuis onze cens ans, les hommes illustres qu'elle a donnez à l'Eglise & à l'Etat, les privileges accordez par les souverains pontifes & par les évêques, les dons des rois, des princes & des autres bienfacteurs: avec la description de l'église & de tout ce qu'elle contient de remarquable: le tout justifié par des titres authentiques & enrichi de plans, de figures & d'une carte topographique*. Paris: Chez Frederic Leonard, 1706: 61.

14. Clark, James Midgley. *The Abbey of St. Gall as a Centre...*: 94.

15. Clark, James Midgley. *The Abbey of St. Gall as a Centre...*: 10.

16. *Des maîtres plus instruits, qui avaient eux-mêmes recueilli leur savoir dans différents centres, y enseignaient les sujets plus âgés et capables 'études plus relevées*. ("The more educated teachers, who had collected themselves their knowledge from different centers, where they taught ancient subjects and other relevant studies"). Platelle, Henri. *Le temporel de l'abbaye de Saint-Amand...*: 65.



magister repeated them again and again until the pupils memorized the one hundred and fifty Psalms.¹⁷ Afterwards they started to learn how to read and write Latin. The attendance to service “provided the young oblate with a passive knowledge of the shapes of Latin words”.¹⁸ The first reading-book was the Psalter, which by now they must have memorized, continuing with the memorization of word lists, followed by practicing the letters of the alphabets on wax tablets. This was combined with the study of grammar: The first subject of the *trivium* to be learned. The importance of grammar is based in the notion that it enhances the understanding of the world of God manifested in the Holy Scriptures. Aside from the theoretical works of classical and medieval grammarians, the works of Christian poets, especially Prudentius, where used to illustrate examples of the principles of grammar and prosody.¹⁹

After studying grammar, the students were introduced to rhetoric and dialectic. The order in which these were taught changed depending of the school. Dialectic was used to define ideas and formulate arguments.²⁰ Students also had to study rhetoric, but only the theory. Cicero remained the authority and his *De Inventione* and *Rhetorica ad Herennium* were the usual texts to teach and learn this subject.²¹

The presence of Prudentius’ works in these abbeys is quite understandable considering the teaching curriculum. Some of the manuscripts, even exhibit the intrinsic relationship between these Christian poet’s works and grammar. Manuscript Burm. Q.3 begins with a grammar treatise (ff. 1v-8v), and Ms. 10066-77 has some grammatical notes (ff. 139v, 161v-162r) and words lists (ff. 89r-111v). Whether these folios where added when Prudentius’ works where copied or later, they are evidence of the importance of his work for the learning of grammar.

2.2 The act of reading

The different miniatures of the *Psychomachia* in these five codices are intertwined with the verses of the poem, which means that the reader reads the image and the text, he links the images to the words of vice versa. For understanding this it is important to review how the reading process was and what it meant to be literate during the Middle Ages. Today, the meaning of being literate is very different of what it meant during medieval times, and this also changed depending on the

17. Clark, James Midgley. *The Abbey of St. Gall as a Centre...*: 97-98.

18. Law, Vivien. “The Study of Grammar”, *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*, Rosamond McKitterick, ed. Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 1997: 88.

19. Clark, James Midgley. *The Abbey of St. Gall as a Centre...*: 101-102.

20. Law, Vivien. “The Study of Grammar...”: 97; Clark, James Midgley. *The Abbey of St. Gall as a Centre...*: 117.

21. Butterfield, David. “Classical Manuscripts at St Gall and Reichenau”. *Carolingian Culture at Reichenau & St. Gall. 2012. The Carolingian Libraries of St. Gall and Reichenau*. University of California-Los Angeles. 25 April 2015 <http://www.stgallplan.org/en/tours_classical_mss.html>; Reynolds, Suzanne. *Medieval Reading: Grammar, Rhetoric and the Classical Text*. Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 1996: 28; Clark, James Midgley. *The Abbey of St. Gall as a Centre...*: 114-115.



period. Being a literate in the Early Middle Ages, within the monastic culture, was not the same as being literate in the Late Middle Ages around the growing cities.²²

In the period that is being studied, the concept *littera* was associated with the act of speaking and hearing more than that of writing.²³ Isidore of Seville uses the word *littera* to refer both to the written character and to the sound for which it stands.²⁴ Letters are forms connected to sounds or voices but at the same time through the eyesight they help the memory presenting the voices of those that are not physically present.²⁵ So the term *littera* did not only refer to the graphic forms, but also to the sounds of each graphic form. The significance of the image and sound connection has to do with how was the act of reading during the first centuries of the Middle Ages. This, mainly focused in reading aloud, a thing that Michael Camille calls audible reading: seeing, reading and hearing.²⁶

Since late antiquity, audible reading was the common way of reading.²⁷ Reading silently was so rare²⁸ that even Saint Augustin tells in his confessions how astonished he was when he saw Ambrose reading without pronouncing words.²⁹ Reading aloud had many purposes such as helping the illiterate and as an efficient way of memorizing texts. Within the religious community reading was a communal act³⁰ from which all the monks, especially those unable to read, took advantage of it. Examples of audible reading can be found throughout the different activities that took place within the abbey. For example, at service when the Holy Scriptures, Psalms and Hymns were read, during the course of the meals a lector read aloud while the rest of the community ate in silence and listened to him, and at lessons the teacher read aloud from a book.

Even though during the Early Middle Ages abbeys and monasteries were the centers of culture and learning, not all of its members were fully literate, contrary

22. According to Michael Camille depending of the time and period the meanings of words can change. Camille, Michael. "The Gregorian Definition Revisited: Writing and the Medieval Image", *L'image. Fonctions et usages des images dans l'Occident médiéval. Actes du 6e "International Workshop on Medieval Societies"*, Centre Ettore Majorana (Erice, Sicile, 17-23 Octobre 1992), Jérôme Baschet, Jean Claude Schmitt, eds. Paris: Le Léopard d'or, 1996: 91.

23. Camille, Michael. "Seeing and reading: some visual implications of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy". *Art History*, 8 (1985): 28.

24. Isidore uses the word *littera* ("letter") to refers both to the written character and to the sound for which it stands". See: Isidore of Seville. *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, ed. and trans. Stephen A. Barney, W.J. Lewis, J.A. Beach, Oliver Berghof. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006: 40 (footnote 3); Carruthers, Mary. *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*. Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 1992: 111; Camille, Michael. "The Gregorian Definition...": 92.

25. *Litterae autem sunt indices rerum, signa verborum, quibus tanta vis est, ut nobis dicta absentium sine voce loquantur*. Isidoro de Sevilla. *Etimologías*, ed. and trans. José Oroz Reta, Manuel A. Marcos Casquero. Madrid: Biblioteca de autores cristianos, 1982: I, 278 (I.iii.1).

26. Camille, Michael. "Seeing and Reading...": 28.

27. Carruthers, Mary. *The Book of Memory...*: 170.

28. Carruthers, Mary. *The Book of Memory...*: 170.

29. Agustín de Hipona. *Obras de San Agustín*, ed. Ángel Custodio Vega. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1973: II, 233 (VI.iii).

30. Camille, Michael. "Seeing and Reading...": 33.



to the popular belief that all monks could read and write.³¹ Those able to read in fact were a minority and those that were able to write or (more precisely), capable of copying a text, could not necessarily read what they have copied. Even though the oblates formed quite a numerous group within the abbey, and after finishing their education many of them took the vows and remained in the community,³² they were under formation. It took them various years to have the necessary knowledge to handle complex texts by themselves. Aside from the students in training, there were also other members that could not read: the lay brothers, the ones in charge of the manual works. These men usually joined the community during their adulthood, and in most cases this meant that they were not educated. It seems that there are cases from the 10th century but their role became noticeable during the 11th century when their number increased.³³ If we consider the different members that constituted the monastic community and what Camille states through his analysis, three types of monks can be found within the community: the literate ones, those who needed the literates help to fully understand a text and can be call semi-literates and the illiterates.³⁴

A copyist's or scribes' job mainly consisted in transcribing correctly what was dictated to him and that did not mean that he was a *litteratus* ("literate").³⁵ Within the monastic context the *litteratus* was the person that aside from being able to read a text in Latin, he was also capable of fully understand what was written in this language.³⁶ The first thing a young monk learned to memorize the dogmas and the different teachings of the Church, but this did not mean that they comprehended what they were memorizing. They were in fact semi-literate and not fully literates because they did not comprehend everything. Since many could pronounce what they read in Latin, the understanding of what was read was important thing to be considered a literate. In this period a person who knew how to read did not necessarily know or could read.³⁷ The institutional language was Latin, and all the important documents and texts were written in it, but on a daily basis what was used were the vernaculars.³⁸ Even though many of the monks of a community could read the different manuscripts that the abbey held, only a few could fully comprehend the content of them. This is the main reason why the semi-literates needed the skills of the literate monks in order to have full access to the texts: in order to comprehend its meaning.

31. Camille, Michael. "Seeing and Reading...": 32.

32. Poussin, Clovis. *Monographie de l'abbaye et de l'église de St-Remi de Reims...*: 48.

33. Lawrence, Clifford Hugh. *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*. London-New York: Longman, 1989: 178; Knowles, David. *El monacato cristiano*. Madrid: Ediciones Guadarrama, S.A., 1969: 73-74; D'Ayzac, Félicie-Marie-Emilie. *Histoire de l'abbaye de Saint-Denis en France...*: 75.

34. Camille, Michael. "Seeing and Reading...": 32.

35. Camille, Michael. "Seeing and Reading...": 28.

36. Camille, Michael. "Seeing and Reading...": 28.

37. Reynolds, Suzanne. *Medieval Reading...*: 28.

38. Camille, Michael. "The Gregorian Definition...": 98.



Also, different tools were designed to make these works reachable to the semi-literate individuals. The vernacular glosses are the best known tools. Thanks to these, a literate monk explained in vernacular the main ideas and concepts of the text. The *grammaticus*, *magister*, or the lector who guided the lecture, was another resource for understanding Latin texts.³⁹ Audible reading allowed some comprehension of what was read. The comprehension that came with the audible reading was not only the result of the individual's own thoughts. It was also the product of thoughts, questionings and introspections of the literate aid by monumental paintings, sculptures and many other representations.⁴⁰ Therefore, images where like glosses and allowed a better understanding of the text to those not fully literate.

2.3 The library and scriptorium

These monasteries had important libraries and scriptoriums. Today, thanks to some surviving inventories and the writings of some of the *magistri*, at some extent, subjects and authors that comprised the library and where used as part of the teaching curriculum of these abbeys are known. Most of these consisted of classical authors, the Greek and Latin Fathers, early Christian poets and the Holy Scriptures.⁴¹ Some of the most notorious authors quoted either by the monks or by the inventories are: Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Gregory the Great, Prudentius, Martianus Capella, Boethius, Bede, Alcuin, Donatus, Priscian, Quintilian, Virgil, Horace, Terence, Cicero and Ovid.

Books were the main source of cultural dissemination in Carolingian time and afterwards.⁴² The scriptoriums played an important role in this process, by exchanging, lending, copying and producing theme. In some scriptoriums, such as Saint Gall and Reichenau, books were produced to fill the needs of the monastery school and library.⁴³ They borrowed the text from another library and copied it at their scriptorium. Also, there were abbeys that were famous for the production and exportation of certain books. Saint Amand, for example, was well known for its Mass Books.⁴⁴

The first examples of codices can be traced to the 2nd century and in the 4th and 5th century its use became more and more the norm, setting aside the papyrus.⁴⁵

39. Reynolds, Suzanne. *Medieval Reading...*: 29.

40. Camille, Michael. "Seeing and Reading...": 33.

41. Platelle, Henri. *Le temporel de l'abbaye de Saint-Amand...*: 68 ; Clark, James Midgley. *The Abbey of St. Gall as a Centre...*: 91-124; Poussin, Clovis. *Monographie de l'abbaye et de l'église de St-Remi de Reims...*: 70-71; D'Ayzac, Félicie-Marie-Emilie. *Histoire de l'abbaye de Saint-Denis en France...*: 15.

42. McKitterick, Rosammond. "Script and Book Production", *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*, Rosamond McKitterick, ed. Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 1997: 221.

43. McKitterick, Rosammond. "Script and Book Production...": 242.

44. McKitterick, Rosammond. "Script and Book Production...": 243.

45. Weitzmann, Kurt. *El rollo y el códice. Un estudio del origen y el método de la iluminación de textos*. Madrid: Nerea. 1990: 58, 60 (original text from 1947); Weitzmann, Kurt. *Studies in Classical and Byzantine Manuscript*



Even though manuscripts were used so early in history to transmit and circulate texts, many of the classical, Christian and Jewish works were passed down through 9th century copies. Countless of these texts were shaped by the Carolingian scribes, influencing on the visual and aesthetic comprehension of later centuries.⁴⁶ They were the responsible for the *mise-en-page* of many surviving manuscripts. This arrangement was not arbitrary, but rather well fixed, it had a purpose. The distinct elements that visually comprise the folio such as the use of different shapes and sizes of fonts and images, the arrangement of the text, the columns and the miniatures, seduced and persuaded the reader.

The codex is par excellence the surface in which text and image are bound together. The miniatures of these five codices are not mere aesthetic elements that embellished the pages of the poem. They complement each other and aid the reader in different ways. They can transmit in a more efficient way the meanings of the words and also they can help the reader to memorize them, in our particular case the verses of the *Psychomachia*.⁴⁷ In these five illustrated copies of Prudentius' poem he is depicted once or twice. In every case the effigy is accompanied by a subtitle which can be fully comprehend thanks to the miniature. The images and subtitles are within the text, creating a close relation between image-word-memory.

3. *Prudentius orat: the author's image*

There is a clue within the *Psychomachia* manuscripts that confirm that these were read aloud, Prudentius' image. In these five codices the poet was represented and in four of them twice. This is curious because in the text the author is not mentioned. Even though Helen Woodruff in her study used the pseudo portrait of the author to treat the affiliation problem of the manuscripts, she did not pay attention to the fact that these representations are not related to the text but are inventions of the illuminator or the person that ordered the figures of the text.⁴⁸

These five codices are part of the same group, manuscripts Burm.Q.3 and Lat. 8085 derive from the same prototype (Illustrations 23 and 24). In the nine miniatures with the authors he is in front of an altar and thanks to the *tituli* the anthropomorphic figures can be identified as Prudentius.

In the 9th century manuscripts the author was represented preceding the first twenty verses of the poems in which God is invoked. In the miniatures, Prudentius was depicted in front of an altar, in a praying attitude with his knees on the

Illumination. ed. Herbert L. Kessler. Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press, 1971: 96.

46. Garrison, Mary. "The Emergence of Carolingian Latin Literature and the Court of Charlemagne", *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*, Rosamond McKitterick, ed. Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 1997: 112; McKitterick, Rosamond. "Script and Book Production...": 231.

47. McKitterick, Rosamond. "Script and Book Production...": 231; Camille, Michael. "Seeing and Reading...": 38.

48. Woodruff, Helen. "The Illustrated Manuscripts of Prudentius...": 52.



ground and his hands raised towards the sky (Illustrations 1, 2 and 3). In these miniatures most of the composition is dominated by the altar and the building has a less important role and was set aside in the background. The façade of the temple resembles that of an antique Roman temple: two columns with capitals and on top a pediment. The title of manuscripts Burm Q. 3 and Ms. 9987-91 is: *Prudentius orat* (Illustration 2). In the Parisian codex: *Prudentii. Invocatio giusde* (Illustration 3).

In these codices there is another representation of the poet. In the three examples, the image precedes the last twenty-five verses of the poem which are a thanksgiving prayer (Illustrations 4, 5 and 6). Here, the illuminators eliminated the altar and only kept the façade of the temple. Prudentius is standing in front of the temple which was drawn in a higher level, and looks towards it. His hands gestures are similar to those in the first representations: open and palms facing up. The *tituli* of these three miniatures says: *Prudentius gratias agit do*.

The 10th century illuminations show a more elaborated composition, in all of them the altar is inside a more embellished temple (Illustrations 7, 8 and 9). Through the entrance and the windows, the altar and a lamp that resembles a lot to a votive crown can be seen (Illustrations 7 and 8). In front of the temple, sitting on what looks like a scriptorium table, is Prudentius. On top of this table are different objects which are related to the act of writing, such as pens, inkwell, and parchment rolls. Thanks to these objects can be inferred that the author is within a space dedicated to the process of writing. Of these two examples only Ms. 10066-77 has a second image of the author (Illustration 9). Again he is in front of a temple, but this is quite different from the rest of the illuminations. This temple resembles mores to a tower and ends with a little altar decorate with a lamp and a cross.

The gestures of the poet in the invocation miniature of the 10th century manuscripts are more intricate and different than those of the 9th century ones. In these two miniatures with his right hand he touches a codex while he elevates his left hand, palm facing up (Illustrations 7 and 8). In the Berm manuscript, aside from touching the codex, Prudentius also holds a stylus which he uses to write. In the 10th century Belgium manuscript he only touches the book but the gesture of his left hand is peculiar, since he brings his thumb to his lips. The *tituli* are different, in Ms. 10066-77 written in yellow ink can be read *Prudentius scolastic orat*. The identification of the Cod. 264 image title was more difficult. The pigments are worn-out, but we managed to read in the read letter over the purple background: *Prudenti, oratio*.

In all of the *tituli* the name of the authors appear and these are helpful to identify the anthropomorphic Illustration. Even though Prudentius' name or any other allusion to his person can be found in the poem, the presence of his portrait or image can be explained through the text of it. The miniatures within these five manuscripts closely followed Prudentius' text. The poem starts with the *Praefatio*, in which some events of Abraham's life are narrated, more precisely Loth's rescue and what came after it. These events where depicted in the five copies. In some of the codices also was included a miniature of the Binding of Isaac, which clearly is connected to the verses about Abraham's descendent and how he followed God's



will.⁴⁹ The *Praefatio* is followed immediately by the poem which begins with a prayer asking God the capacity to defeat the passions and vices and to be able to follow the path of virtues.⁵⁰ The prayer ends saying that the tool to defeat these passions it is in the reader's hand; and immediately the battle of the soul starts. The verses of the poem describe the different combats of the virtues and vices, the victory of the virtues and the sermons pronounced by this. The poem ends with a thanks prayer to God.

The Prudentius' images at the beginning and end of the poem are connected to the verses of the prayers at these parts of the poem. Read aloud the verses of both prayers inside a monastery could have been interpreted as the readers praying instead of the author's prayer. It is very difficult to establish the active voice, because the conjugation of the verbs in these verses points out to a third person singular form or a first person plural form. This confusion is cleared out through the poet's portrait. The miniatures and its *tituli* clearly states who pronounces the worlds: the author. Thanks to the images and the articulation of words it is possible for does voices that are not physically present, to be present.

The *tituli* of Prudentius' miniatures help the spectator to identify the human Illustration as the poet, but in a transversal way the images also help to clarify the meaning of the *tituli*. The gestures of the images enrich the titles. The word *orat* appears in four of the miniatures. This word can be translated and understood as 'pray', but this is not the meaning in all the cases. In the depictions where Prudentius is on his knees in a praying attitude *Prudentius orat* can be perfectly translated for Prudentius prays (Illustrations 1).⁵¹ The gestures of the portrait in the codex of the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* is the same but instead of *orat* was used the word *invocation*. This can be translated to 'invoke', perfectly describing the action of the Illustration: the poet invokes God's guidance through a praying (Illustration 3).

In the two 10th century representations different forms of *orat* could be found. In these cases, their meaning change and it cannot be translated for to pray because the gestures of the Illustrations do not show this action. It is thanks to the hand gesture of the Illustration that the meaning of *orat* can be clarified (Illustrations 7 and 8). *Orat*, form the Latin verb *oro*, aside from to pray, also stands for other actions such as: to say, to speak and even to pronounce. The hand gestures of the poet in Cod. 264, elevated hand palm facing up, and the more specific gesture of Ms. 10066-77, the thumb touching his mouth, points out that he is speaking or saying something. In the Belgium manuscript (Illustration 8) the Illustration turns the page of the book his holding, as he is reading the text. In other words, the hand gesture clarifies the meaning and also assures the viewers that the action taking place is that of speaking. Prudentius is not only writing the first verses, the praying, of his poem but he is pronouncing them also. The author's portrait reminds the reader that the

49. Prudencio Clemente, Aurelio. *Obras Completas de Aurelio Prudencio...*: 308-309 (*Psychomachia*, "Praefatio", vv. 1-10).

50. Prudencio Clemente, Aurelio. *Obras Completas de Aurelio Prudencio...*: 312-313 (*Psychomachia*, vv. 1-18).

51. Schmitt, Jean-Claude. *La raison des gestes: dans l'occident Médiéval*. Paris: Gallimard, 1992.



active voice thru the first and last verses is Prudentius'. As Isidore asserted, through the eyesight it is possible to give a voice and hear those who are not physically present.⁵² This is done not only with graphic symbols, letters, but also with the aid of images. Before reading the texts of the praying verses, the reader or spectator read Prudentius' image which introduces them to the following verses. Aside from giving the author a voice in Isidore's sense, the 10th century illuminations, served also as proof of how the reading process was during this period, even though it is unknown if the *tituli* were read aloud or were read only by the *litteratus* or the semi-literate. What it is clear in these different representations of the poet is that regardless of the verb used in the *tituli* they all state that *littera* are been pronounced.

4. The battles of virtues and vices: the narrative cycle

The diverse battles between the virtues and vices take place immediately after the praying verses. They follow the same schemes as Prudentius' image: first, it is the miniature of the combat or any other scene and after it the verses in which these are described. The 9th century codices have approximately eighty miniatures directly related to the verses. The 10th century manuscripts have fewer images: Ms. 10066-77 has around 52 while Cod. 264, approximately 38. Even though the 10th century manuscripts have less miniatures than the rest of the codices, the most important and memorable scenes, such as the ones where a vice attacks a virtue, the moment when the virtue defeats the vice and kills her, and the following scene after the virtue's victory were kept in the five codices. Certain characteristics also were kept: the depiction of the vices as monstrous and hideous Illustrations, the use of red ink in the monochrome manuscripts (Ms. 9987-91 and Burm.Q.3) to highlight the blood and the *tituli* in red which describe the different scenes and also helps identifying the virtues and vices. Regardless some of the stylistics differences, in the five manuscripts the body language and energy of the anthropomorphic Illustrations in the various illuminations stand out, especially in those of the combats and the vices' death.

The hand gestures and the *tituli* in Prudentius' images are what allowed the spectator to fully understand the meaning of the image. Hand gestures can be found throughout the entire poem, specifically in each part of the poem when the different virtues reprimand (*increpat*) the conquered vices, as if they were pronouncing *littera*. In these particular scenes, as in the miniatures with the author's effigy, we can find subtitles that clarified the meaning of the image. Usually in the *tituli* appear the name of the virtue with the word *increpat* and under the miniature the named virtue with her hand in a similar manner to Prudentius'. Nevertheless, the gestures of the virtues are similar of those of the poet, in this particular case they are not the

52. Isidoro de Sevilla. Etimologías.....: 278 (I.iii.1).



illuminators personal creation. They are following what the texts implies, the text was transcribed in an image.

Thanks to Prudentius' miniatures the person with the active voice in the first and final verses of the poem can be identified: the poet himself. Also they remind the readers and spectators that the poem begins and ends with a prayer, engraving in their memory the *incipit* and the *excipit* of the literary work. The author's image presents the persons that is not physically present, but in the case of the virtues and vices does not work in the same manner.

All of these miniatures graphically summarize the most memorable verses of the poem. In many illustrated Carolingian manuscripts, especially those with works in verses, the images worked as glosses of the text that allowed a better understanding of it, such as in the Utrecht Psalter.⁵³ These Prudentius' manuscripts are not an exception. But also all the miniatures of the *Psychomachia* codices function as mnemonic tools.⁵⁴ Within the monastic context most of the medieval knowledge was transmitted by memory, this was one of the main reasons it was so important to memorize different texts.

5. Medieval memory: the importance of memorizing

Through its vivid and elaborated allegories, the *Psychomachia* turned an abstract subject to a concrete one. This allowed it to gain a lot of popularity throughout the Middle Ages. Nowadays, it is unknown who Prudentius wrote his poem to, but as early as the 4th century the battle against vices and passions affected religious men. In this subject many have written and have given advice on how to keep away from them.⁵⁵ Despite these men's efforts, the *Psychomachia* was the tool that offered men how to defeat them: the virtues.⁵⁶ Even Prudentius asserts this in the last three verses of the invocation: *Vicendi paresens ratio est, si comminus ipsas / virtutum facies et conculcantia contra / viribus infestis liceat portenta notare.*⁵⁷

During the Early and High Middle Ages the *Battle of the Soul* was an important resource within the monastics communities. This was a key tool within the

53. Sánchez Ameijeiras, Rocío. *Los rostros de las palabras. Imágenes y teoría literaria en el Occidente Medieval*. Madrid: Akal, 2014: 191.

54. Mary Carruthers in *The Craft of Thought* briefly analyses some of the mnemonic qualities of one of the *Psychomachia* manuscript. Carruthers, Mary. *The Craft of Thought. Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images*. Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 1998: 143-150.

55. Evagrius Ponticus compiled the first list of vices that affected the souls of monks. Eventually Johan Cassian and Gregory the Great also treated the subject. See: Newhauser, Richard. *The Treatise on Vices and Virtues in Latin and the Vernacular*. Turnhout: Brepols, 1993.

56. O'Sullivan, Sinéad. *Early Medieval Glosses on Prudentius' Psychomachia...*: 4.

57. "The path to victory is there before your eyes. We must study the features of the virtues and the dark monsters waiting there to challenge their strength". Prudencio Clemente, Aurelio. *Obras Completas de Aurelio Prudencio...*: 312-313 (*Psychomachia*, vv. 18-20).



curriculum, especially for teaching grammar.⁵⁸ Also it was used as a moral treatise, and it was used to learn the stories of the Bible, because its structure resembled a little one. It begins with a story of Genesis and ends with apocalyptic allusions.⁵⁹ The fact that today more than three hundred copies, illustrated and unillustrated, of Prudentius' work survived, the great amount of glosses within them and the use of his work as an authority confirms the popularity of Prudentius during the Middle Ages.⁶⁰ Since the combat against vices began in the monasteries, it was imperative for the monks of the community to know with what they were dealing with and as Saint Paul says: "Put on the full armor of God so as to be able to resist the devil's tactics" (*Ephesians*, 6:11).

Because the poem was important for the study and learning of grammar and also provided the path of how to conquer the vices that invaded the thoughts and acts of anyone, it was essential for religious men to learn by memory Prudentius' poem.⁶¹ Within the moral, memory plays a key role. This provides the capacity that shows or represents the experiences that will help to make any moral judgment.⁶² The moral value of memory was important for praying and meditation.⁶³ For studying grammar memorizing was so crucial that learning to memorize or to read was thought as the same activity.⁶⁴

The practice of memorization was crucial for learning anything, especially to read and write. During the course of the Middle Age the role of memory was essential. All that was learned from books was archived in this: the different sermons and above all the moral behaviors which will gain an individual eternal salvation.⁶⁵ Through the repetition of a text read aloud this was engraved in the mind of a person, and for this audible reading was used as a mnemonic device.⁶⁶ However, the best sense to use for memorizing was the eyesight and not the hearing.⁶⁷

The eyesight was linked to the memorization process and also to the process of reading. Even though reading was done aloud, it was necessary to see the different

58. O'Sullivan, Sinéad. *Early Medieval Glosses on Prudentius' Psychomachia*...: 11.

59. To Sinéad O'Sullivan the structure of the *Psychomachia* resembles the Bible. According to Gernot Wieland the episodes of Abrahams' life and the Apocalypses are not enough proves to state that the structure of the poem follows the Bible. Regardless of Wieland's statement, we most highlight that throughout the poem, particularly within the virtues' speeches, there are a lots of references to different stories from the Old and New Testament. O'Sullivan, Sinéad. *Early Medieval Glosses on Prudentius' Psychomachia*...: 128; Wieland, Gernot. "Review Early Medieval Glosses on Prudentius' 'Psychomachia': The Weitz Tradition". *Speculum*, 80/3 (2005): 945.

60. O'Sullivan, Sinéad. *Early Medieval Glosses on Prudentius' Psychomachia*...: 20.

61. O'Sullivan, Sinéad. *Early Medieval Glosses on Prudentius' Psychomachia*...: 131.

62. Carruthers, Mary. *The Book of Memory*...: 68.

63. Carruthers, Mary. *The Book of Memory*...: 101.

64. Carruthers, Mary. *The Book of Memory*...: 101.

65. Kimberly A. Rivers analyzes the use of mental images of the virtues and vices as mnemonic devices between the 12th and 13th century for the act of preaching. Rivers, Kimberly A. *Preaching the Memory of Virtue and Vice. Memory, Images, and Preaching in the Late Middle Ages*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2010.

66. Camille, Michael. "Seeing and Reading...": 30.

67. Carruthers, Mary. *The Book of Memory*...: 73; Camille, Michael. "The Gregorian Definition...": 99.



letters and words and memorize these images to do it right.⁶⁸ So, mnemonic devices were developed in different learning centers. Things (*ad res*) or words (*ad verba*) could be memorized.⁶⁹ Medieval mnemonics were inspired by classical texts. Cicero's treatises the *Ad Herennium* or *De Inventione* established the rules of classic mnemonics and are related to classical rhetoric.⁷⁰ Aside from the theoretical teaching of these treatises, the Medieval world found useful its advices for learning moral. These treatises recommended the memorization of *ad res*, which was more effective than memorizing *ad verba*.⁷¹ For the mnemonics to work, the *memoria ad res* created mental images also known as *phantasmata* which were the product of material images, memory images or linguistics images.⁷²

According to these texts, it was necessary the creation of *loci* for memorizing *ad res*, places within the mind in which the person was going to keep the *phantasmata* (the mental image) of whatever he wanted to memorize. The authors of these treatises established as the *loci*, the rooms of architectural spaces, and its descriptions should include its location or the different things that decorate it.⁷³ Even though late antiquity preferred a three-dimensional space to establish the mind spaces, the first centuries of the Middle Ages favored the two-dimensional surface. The best example is the manuscript's folio.⁷⁴

The folio of a manuscript was an essential tool for memorizing. For this reason, it was encouraged to memorize the text from the same written source.⁷⁵ Later on Victor of Saint Hugh transferred the mnemonic practices to the structure of the folios and its decorations.⁷⁶ The columns, paragraph and even the images of the sheets became the *loci* of memory.⁷⁷ The constant emphasis in memorizing images has to do with the fact that through this it is possible to retain effectively more information.⁷⁸ According to Yates, during the Middle Ages the artificial memory was relocated from the learning of rhetoric to the learning of ethics.⁷⁹ This moralized the

68. Carruthers, Mary. *The Book of Memory*...: 19.

69. Carruthers, Mary. *The Book of Memory*...: 73.

70. Yates, Frances Amelia. *El arte de la memoria*. Madrid: Taurus, 1974: 13-41 (Chapter: "Las tres fuentes latinas del arte clásica de la memoria").

71. Yates, Frances Amelia. *El arte de la memoria*...; Geary, Patrick. "Memoria", *Diccionario razonado del Occidente medieval*. Madrid: Ediciones Akal S.A., 2003: 533.

72. Schmitt, Jean-Claude. "Imago': de l'image à l'imaginaire", *L'image. Fonctions et usages des images dans l'Occident médiéval. Actes du 6e "International Workshop on Medieval Societies", Centre Ettore Majorana (Erice, Sicile, 17-23 Octobre 1992)*, Jérôme Baschet, Jean Claude Schmitt, eds. Paris: Le Léopard d'or, 1996: 29.

73. Yates in her book also describes some of the classical treatises of memory, such as Cicero's *Ad Herennium*, *De Inventione* and *De oratore* and Quintilian's *Instituto oratoria*. Yates, Frances Amelia. *El arte de la memoria*...: 13-41.

74. Geary, Patrick. "Memoria...": 533; Yates, Frances Amelia. *El arte de la memoria*...

75. Carruthers, Mary. *The Book of Memory*...: 9.

76. Rivers, Kimberly A. *Preaching the Memory of Virtue and Vice*...: 47.

77. Patrick Geary points out the mnemonic use of illuminations within a manuscript. Geary, Patrick. "Memoria...": 533.

78. Carruthers, Mary. *The Book of Memory*...: 73.

79. Yates, Frances Amelia. *El arte de la memoria*...: 76.



imagines agentes and throughout the physical resemblance of these Illustrations it was possible to distinguish between those acts that could help an individual in the afterlife to win Heaven or avoid Hell.⁸⁰

Prudentius' vivid allegories and its many Biblical references showed religious men determined sinful behaviors that they needed to avoid and the path to follow in order to gain salvation. Very early in history, the mental images created by the author became real ones, since some scholars affirm that as early as the 5th century illuminated manuscripts of the *Battle of the Soul* were circulating.⁸¹ It can be concluded that it was an imperative for any religious men to learn by memory the entire poem and this was easily possible by creating certain images that helped the artificial memory.

Early monastic rules encouraged the members of the monastic community to fully memorize in a right manner the different texts of their libraries, above all those of Christian authorship, and Prudentius' work was part of this list.⁸² After all, the classical poet's work was an essential one during the Middle Ages. We only need to consider the amount of manuscripts that today survive or all the different artistic and literary works that were influenced and inspired by this poem. Through the illuminations of these manuscripts is possible to engrave in the mind the verses of the poem. This works for all of the parts of the poem, because even the verses of the *Praefatio* have been represented following the scheme mentioned above.

After explaining how significant was the memory for the monastic culture between the Early and High Middle Ages, the period where these five manuscripts were illuminated, the word-image-memory relationship mentioned at the beginning of this paper can be clarified. This connection work as follow: an individual reads a text which he needs to learn by memory. The first image or images he perceives are the words. In order to retain them he must create a *phantasmata* of them. This will be perceived and analyzed by the mind, and stored in an organized place, keeping in mind the structure of the folio, and lastly the text which wants to be memorized will be kept.⁸³ It is easier to remember it with the help of a visual stimulus; after all we think in images.⁸⁴ These must be engraved in the mind as a wax seal and should be memorable. Memorable images:

[...] should be of moderate size, but that is their only moderate feature. Because the memory retains distinctly only what is extraordinary, wonderful, and intensely charged with emotion, the images should be of extremes –of ugliness or beauty,

80. Yates, Frances Amelia. *El arte de la memoria*....: 98.

81. Stettiner, Richard. *Die Illustrierten Prudentiushandschriften*...; Mâle, Émile. *El arte religioso del siglo XIII en Francia*...; Woodruff, Helen. "The Illustrated Manuscripts of Prudentius...": 31-79; Katzenellenbogen, Adolf. *Allegories of the Virtues and Vices in Mediaeval Art*...

82. Carruthers, Mary. *The Book of Memory*....: 88; Ganz, David. "The Libraries, Librarians and Library Catalogues of Reichenau and St. Gall". *Carolingian Culture at Reichenau & St. Gall. 2012. The Carolingian Libraries of St. Gall and Reichenau*. University of California-Los Angeles. 24 April 2015 <http://www.stgallplan.org/en/tours_libraries.html>.

83. Carruthers, Mary. *The Book of Memory*....: 17.

84. Yates, Frances Amelia. *El arte de la memoria*....: 49.



ridicule or nobility, of laughter or weeping, of worthiness or salaciousness. Bloody figures, or monstrosities, or figures brilliantly but abnormally colored should be used, and they should be engage in activity of a sort that is extremely vigorous.⁸⁵

For contemporary scholars of medieval memory, such as Frances Yates and Mary Carruthers, the phantasmata materialized and became real images depicted in different mediums. The creation of images, mental or real, was a reciprocal one. Well-known representations could be used as phantasmata. This speeded up the memorization process because the individual did not have to create new images. He just needed to use the ones that already were given to him.⁸⁶ These mnemonic practices of the classical and medieval world were used in the illuminations of these *Psycomachia* manuscripts, and they function as follow.

5.1 *Virtues and Vices as mnemonic devices*

All the miniatures in these manuscripts were painted within the columns of the text, especially those where the virtues and vices are located. Apart from the Parisian manuscript, the rest of them were written in one column in which the text and the images that illustrate it are fixed in between. The *tituli* were written in red on top the scene they describe. In these five manuscripts the same scenes are immediately followed by the same verses. Even though the text of Ms. Lat. 8085 was written in two columns, the scheme was kept and every single illumination was placed in the same order following the exact same verses that in the codices arranged in one column

Several characteristics in these codices should be pointed out. First, they were likely illustrated with similar gestures. Also, the vices were depicted as grotesque figures. And in all of them particular scenes were kept like the one where the virtues lecture the vices or the one where the virtues kill the vices.

Some of these traits were the ones considered by Richard Stettiner and Helen Woodruff to catalog these manuscripts under the same group, as it can be observed in both stemmas (Illustrations 23 and 24). This sort of explains the resemblances in composition and style.⁸⁷ Beside the visual likeness of all of them, they also share other features such as the geographical zone they were created and their relationship with important Benedictine abbeys and the Carolingian world.

Monasteries exchange codices to make copies of them and enlarge their libraries.⁸⁸ The abbeys of Saint-Denis, Saint-Amand, Saint-Laurent, Saint-Gall, Saint-Remi were connected in many aspects. This relationship was not only enclosed to the inter-library loan. It also comprised the different members of the community; these

85. Carruthers, Mary. *The Book of Memory*...: 133

86. Yates, Frances Amelia. *El arte de la memoria*...: 103.

87. See Richard Stettiner's work: Stettiner, Richard. *Die Illustrierten Prudentiushandschriften*...

88. Pächt, Otto. *La miniatura medieval: una introducción*. Madrid: Alianza, 1987: 74-75.



often were assigned to serve as teachers and even as abbots of other cloisters.⁸⁹ This can explain some of the similarities between the codices, above all the arrangement of the scenes and the text, but the location of these miniatures is not arbitrary. In all the cases, each miniature precedes the verse they depict. The reader or spectator first reads the verses in image and then in written words. The columns and the arrangements of the illuminations became the *loci*. The images were located in specific places of the text to remember the *ad res*. The *ad res* helps remembering the main idea or topic of what wants to be reminded and allows the person to explain the text in its own words.⁹⁰ When reading, first one sees the graphical representation and then the verses. The image allows us to know the verses in advance. As an example, the first scene of the poem will be used to explain how this works. The *Cultura deorum* and *Fides* scene begins with the representation of it and through the image the spectator knows in advance that *Fides*, with bare shoulders, is the first virtue to come to the battle field. Immediately she is attacked by *Cultura deorum* (Illustrations 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14). The representation is followed by the text in which, in written words, displays the same information of the image:

*Prima petit campum dubia sub sorte duelli
pugnatura Fides agresti turbida cultu
nuda umeros intonsa comas exerta lacertos.
Namque repentinus laudis calor ad noua feruens
proelia nec telis meminit nec tegmine cingi;
pectore sed fidens valido membrisque reiectis
provocat insani frangenda pericula belli.
Ecce lacessentem conlantis viribus audet
prima ferire Fidem veterum Cultura deorum.*⁹¹

This first scene is just an example, but this exercise can be perfectly done with any other scene and verse of these manuscripts.

In these manuscripts the use of the folio as the location for the *loci* is not the only mnemonic advice used. In the different miniatures some particularities that make them memorable can be identified and these can also be considered mnemonic devices. These

89. For the subject see: Prache, Anne. *Saint-Remi de Reims...*; Platelle, Henri. *Le temporel de l'abbaye de Saint-Amand...*; Clark, James Midgley. *The Abbey of St. Gall as a Centre...*; D'Ayzac, Félicie-Marie-Emilie. *Histoire de l'abbaye de Saint-Denis en France...*; Poussin, Clovis. *Monographie de l'abbaye et de l'église de St-Remi de Reims...*; Félibien, Michel. *Histoire de l'abbaye royale de Saint-Denis en France...*

90. Carruthers, Mary. *The Book of Memory...*: 87.

91. "Faith is the first to appear on the field to face the uncertainty of this conflict. Her rough dress is disheveled, her shoulders are bare, her long hair is untrimmed and her arms are uncovered. The glow on her skin is caused by the prospect of sudden and unexpected battle. She hurls to enter new contests, she ignores the demands of armor. Faith puts her confidence in her strong heart and arms. She scorns the dangers of hand-to-hand combat and intends to destroy her foe by exhausting him. The first adversary approaches Faith; it is Worship-of-the-Old-Gods who proposes to accept the challenge of Faith". Prudencio Clemente, Aurelio. *Obras Completas de Aurelio Prudencio...*: 312-313 (*Psychomachia*, vv. 21-29).



memorable characteristics are almost in all the miniatures: the figures' posture and more precisely the hand gestures in the scenes where the virtues lecture the dead vices. In these scenes, the winning virtue elevates her hand, two fingers pointing out and the rest close, in a scolding attitude. In each *titulus* of these scenes the verb used is *inrepat*. This can be translated for 'to reprimand' or to 'scold', confirming that the action taking place is a scolding. The verses that come next have the complete reprimand to the defeated vice. For example, in Ms. 9987-91 in the miniature *Pacientia victrix Iram mortuam increpat* (Illustration 15) with one hand *Pacientia* is holding her spear and shield and with the other one she is pointing out two fingers towards the defeated and death *Ira*. This gesture shows the reader that she is saying something. Based on this gesture, the religious man that consulted the manuscripts could know that every time he sees a virtue or vice with its hand in the same manner it means that the figures were pronouncing something, and in most of the cases scolding the vice (*inrepat*) (Illustrations 15, 16 and 17).

Other memorable features are the tremendously vigorous actions of the figures in the combats and the death scenes. The vices rush against the virtues as in the scene *Cultura Deorum attacks Fides* (Illustrations 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14). Also, the virtues kill the vices, they cut their throats, decapitate or dismember them (Illustrations 18, 19 and 20). In addition, in some scenes certain vices are defeated by their own actions (Examples *Ira*, *Superbia* or *Luxuria*). These actions are all enhanced through the pictorial quality of the miniatures: fast and short traces.

All over the poem the vices are described as wild monsters: some of them with froth, others with long-haired and others with swelling eyes. As *Fides*, the virtues are calm, while the depictions of the vices followed closely the verses and are agitated, furious, and once death their bodies are in bizarre positions, not human at all (Illustrations 10 to 19). Through these gestures the internal movement of the soul, the emotions and the moral life of an individual is physically revealed. Because God is eternal, immovable and the virtues are directly related to Him, they are represented calm and hieratical. On the other hand, the quick and vigorous movements of the vices are common of unstable and earthlier attitudes.⁹²

Apart from the vitality of the figures, other elements were taken from the different advices on memorable images and these also lure the eye of the reader or observer. In some cases, colors were used to accomplish this, like for example, the red of the blood. Regardless the color arrangement of the five manuscripts, monochrome or polychrome, this color and its different shades were used in the miniatures of the five codices. In the monochrome manuscript is the only color that can be found, as it was important for the miniaturist to emphasize these details. In Ms. 10066-77 the faces of the vices were painted green making them more hideous (Illustrations 14 and 21).⁹³

In the first scene of the poem of the 10th century Belgium codex, *Cultura Deorum*, aside from the green face, was depicted also with horns, as if she was a devil (Illustration

92. Schmitt, Jean-Claude. *La raison des gestes...*: 26-29 ; Camille, Michael. *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art*. London: Reaktion books, 1992: 60.

93. "Bloody figures, or monstrosities, or figures brilliantly but abnormally colored should be used [...]". Carruthers, Mary. *The Book of Memory...*: 133.



14). Her counterpart, *Fides* is an androgynous figure, her bare chest shows her breasts but her face is embellished with a beard. She has a halo, even though her description in the poem does not mention this symbol. In this exact same scene of the French manuscript *Fides* was also depicted with a halo (Illustration 12). Regardless the poem not mentioning this attribute, it can be state that the presence of the nimbus enhances the divine quality of Faith, after all these is one of the theological virtues and men can only acquire these virtues by been infuse with divine grace. The figure of *Fides* in Ms. 10066-77, with the beard and the nimbus, evokes a Christ like figure. This virtue was depicted in the two preceding miniatures, but there is not any trace of the beard (Illustration 22). A possible explanation for this detail could be that it was added by a user of the manuscript, which had in mind the Pauline notion that Jesus brings the obedience of faith (*Romans*, 16: 25-27).

In overall these characteristics, the vigor, the gestures, and every distinctive feature of each figure, turn the miniatures of these manuscripts into *imagines agentes*. The closeness to reality, which is accomplished through the use of very well-known images such as those related to the battle and the military world, or symbols already known by the Christian culture such as the palm branch for martyrs, and the halo for reinforcing the idea of holiness, heavenly and divine, of these representations arouse the emotions of the overseers, engraving theme more efficiently in the mind.⁹⁴ The affective quality is important because it helps the memory of any individual and inside the monastic community the semi-literate religious men.⁹⁵ All these visual elements within these manuscripts were used as mnemonic devices to memorize the *Psychomachia*.

As we tried to prove through this paper, the different advices and teachings of the art of memory were applied in these manuscripts and can be found in the different elements and characteristics of them. The arrangement of the scenes is not a random one, but rather is a well thought one because it follows the narration and introduces the reader to it. The images clearly explain the text and the subtitles are barely needed to identify them. A semi-literate or illiterate monk could only have needed to see and memorize each image to remember the *ad res* of the entire poem. After all, when memorizing the thing that was important was retaining the general matter of the text and not the text itself verse by verse.⁹⁶

These early manuscripts are linked directly to the monastic culture and the needs of the individuals of these communities. Despite the fact that this poem is an abstract allegory because the place or *loci* of the battle is intangible because it is within the soul, the author created an allegory that surpassed the limits of mental images, becoming real ones, as the ones in these codices. These real images and its *tituli* allowed the illiterate and semi-literate to memorize the poem, since all the verses have an image equivalent.

94. Yates, Frances Amelia. *El arte de la memoria*...: 23.

95. Yates, Frances Amelia. *El arte de la memoria*...: 23; Camille, Michael. "Seeing and Reading...": 37.

96. Carruthers, Mary. *The Book of Memory*...: 87.



Illustrations



ILLUSTRATION 1. BIBLIOTHEEK DER UNIVERSITEIT, LEIDEN. BURM. Q.3 *PRUDENTIUS ORAT*, f. 122r. (9th CENTURY). ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR, FROM: SOCRATES.LEIDENUNIV.NL.



ILLUSTRATION 2. BIBLIOTHÈQUE ROYALE DE BELGIQUE, BRUSSELS. MS. 9987-91, *PRUDENTIUS ORAT*, f. 102r. (CIRCA 890). ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR, FROM: KBR.BE/FR.





ILLUSTRATION 3. BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE, PARIS. MS. LAT. 8085, *PRUDENTII. INVOCATIO EIUS DEO*, F. 56V. (9TH CENTURY).
ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR, FROM: GALlica.BNF.FR.



ILLUSTRATION 4. BIBLIOTHEEK DER UNIVERSITEIT, LEIDEN. BURM. Q.3., *GRATIAS AGIT DO*, F. 149R. (9TH CENTURY). ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR, FROM: SOCRATES.LEIDENUNIV.NL.



ILLUSTRATION 5. BIBLIOTHÈQUE ROYALE DE BELGIQUE, BRUSSELS. MS. 9987-91, *PRUDENTIUS GRATIAS AGIT DEO*, F. 129R. (CIRCA 890).
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ILLUSTRATION 6. BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE, PARIS. MS. LAT. 8085, *PRUDENTIUS GRATIAS AGIT DEO*, F. 69V. (9TH CENTURY).
ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR.





ILLUSTRATION 7. BURGERBIBLIOTHEK, BERN. COD. 264, *PRUDENTI...ORATIO POETATE*, F. 4R. (CIRCA 900). ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR, FROM: WWW.E-CODICES.UNIFR.CH (E-CODICES-VIRTUAL MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY OF SWITZERLAND).

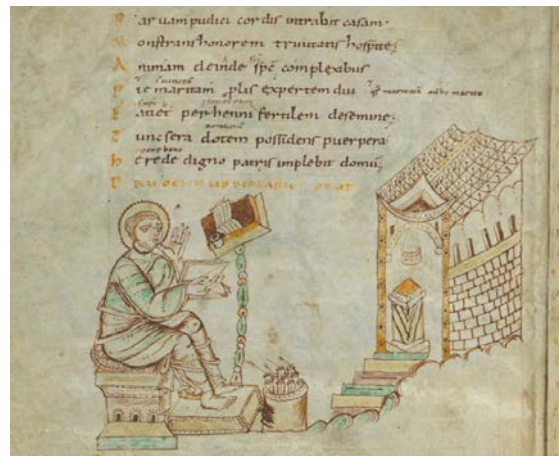


ILLUSTRATION 8. BIBLIOTHÈQUE ROYALE DE BELGIQUE, BRUSSELS. MS. 10066-77, *PRUDENTIUS SCOLASTIC ORAT*, F. 14V. (10TH CENTURY). ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR, FROM: KBR.BE/FR.



ILLUSTRATION 9. BIBLIOTHÈQUE ROYALE DE BELGIQUE, BRUSSELS. MS. 10066-77, *PRUDENTIUS ORAT*, F. 128v. (10TH CENTURY). ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR, FROM: KBR.BE/FR.



ILLUSTRATION 10. BIBLIOTHEEK DER UNIVERSITEIT, LEIDEN. BURM. Q.3., *FIDES PUGNAT CONTRA VETERUM CULTURAM DEORUM*, F. 122v. (9TH CENTURY). ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR, FROM: SOCRATES.LEIDENUNIV.NL.





ILLUSTRATION 11. BIBLIOTHÈQUE ROYALE DE BELGIQUE, BRUSSELS. MS. 9987-91, *FIDES PUGNAT CONTRA VETERUM CULTU DEORUM*, f. 102v. (circa 890). ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR, FROM: KBR.BE/FR.



ILLUSTRATION 12. BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE, PARIS. MS. LAT. 8085, *FIDES SE CURA ADHUC BELLIS IDOLATRIAM REPUGNAT PRIMA*, f. 56v. (9th century). ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR, FROM: GALICA.BNF. FR.



ILLUSTRATION 13. BURGERBIBLIOTHEK, BERN. COD. 264, *FIDES, CULTURA DEORUM*, F. 4v. (CIRCA 900). ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR, FROM: WWW.E-CODICES.UNIFR.CH.

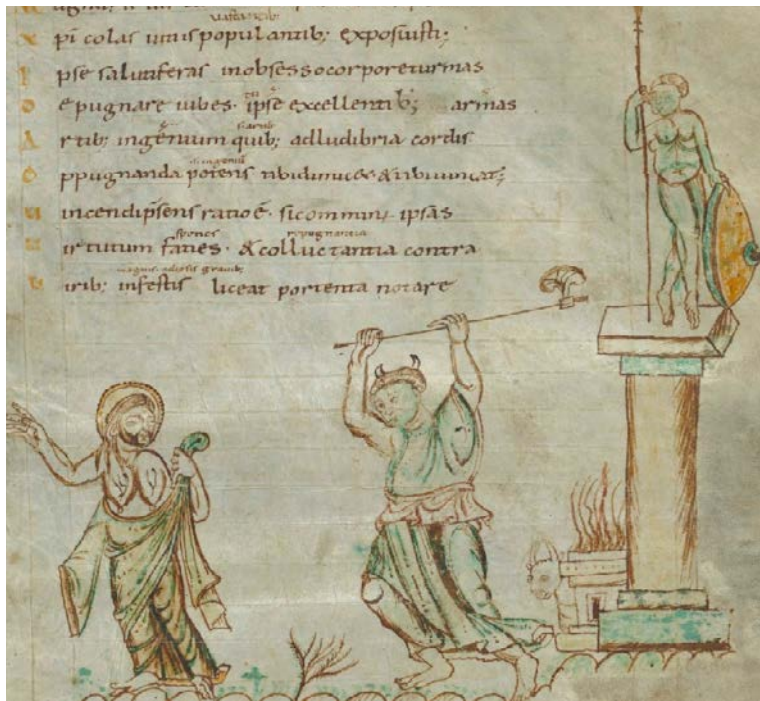


ILLUSTRATION 14. BIBLIOTHÈQUE ROYALE DE BELGIQUE, BRUSSEL. MS. 10066-77, *CULTURA DEORUM ATTACKS A FIDES* F. 115r. (10TH CENTURY). ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR, FROM: KBR.BE/FR.





ILLUSTRATION 15. BIBLIOTHÈQUE ROYALE DE BELGIQUE, BRUSSELS. MS. 9987-91, *PACIENTIA VICTRIX IRAM MORTUAM INCREPAT*, F. 107v. (CIRCA 890). ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR, FROM: KBR.BE/FR.



ILLUSTRATION 16. BIBLIOTHÈQUE ROYALE DE BELGIQUE, BRUSSELS. MS. 9987-91, *SUPERBIA EXTINCTA SPES INCREPAT*, F. 111v. (CIRCA 890). ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR, FROM: KBR.BE/FR.



ILLUSTRATION 17. BIBLIOTHÈQUE ROYALE DE BELGIQUE, BRUSSELS. Ms. 9987-91, *SOBRIETAS INCREPAT LUXURIAM EXTINGTAM*, F. 115R. (CIRCA 890). ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR, FROM: KBR.BE/FR.



ILLUSTRATION 18. BIBLIOTHÈQUE ROYALE DE BELGIQUE, BRUSSELS. Ms. 9987-91, *PUDICITIA LIBIDINEM TRANSFIGIT GLADIO*, F. 104R. (CIRCA 890). ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR, FROM: KBR.BE/FR.





ILLUSTRATION 19. BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE, PARIS. MS. LAT. 8085, *HUMILITAS CAPUT SUPERBLAE OFFERT SPEI*, f. 61r. (9th century). ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR, FROM: GALlica.BNF.FR.



ILLUSTRATION 20. BIBLIOTHÈQUE ROYALE DE BELGIQUE, BRUSSELS. MS. 10066-77, *MEN AND ANIMALS DISMEMBER DISCORDIA*, f. 133v. (10th century). ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR, FROM: KBR.BE/FR.



ILLUSTRATION 21. BIBLIOTHÈQUE ROYALE DE BELGIQUE, BRUSSELS. Ms. 10066-77, *DISCORDIA IS UNCOVERED*, f. 123v. (10TH CENTURY). ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR, FROM: KBR.BE/FR.



ILLUSTRATION 22. BIBLIOTHÈQUE ROYALE DE BELGIQUE, BRUSSELS. Ms. 10066-77, *FIDES VETERUM CULTURAM DEORUM PROSTERNIT ET PEDE CALCAT* AND *FIDES MARTYRIBUS SANCTIS CORONAS OFFERT*, f. 115v. (10TH CENTURY). ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR, FROM: KBR.BE/FR.



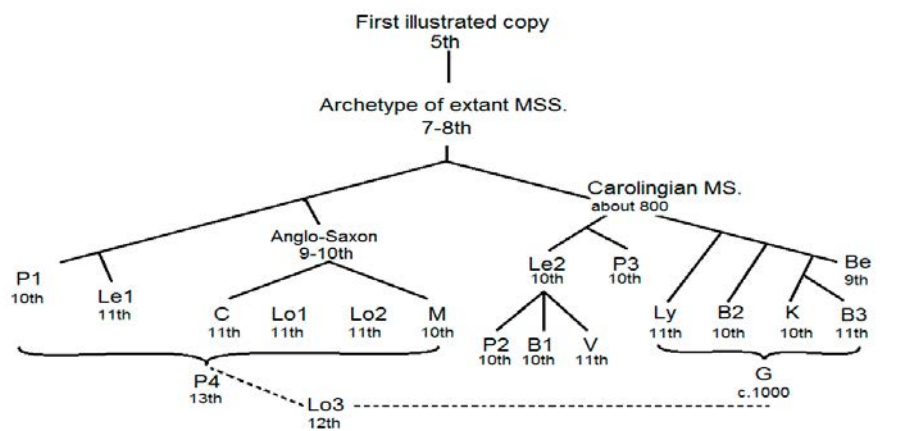


ILLUSTRATION 23. RICHARD STETTINER’S STEMMA. FROM: STETTINER, RICHARD. *DIE ILLUSTRIRTEN PRUDENTIUSHANDSCHRIFTEN...*: 21; WOODRUFF, HELEN. “THE ILLUSTRATED MANUSCRIPTS OF PRUDENTIUS...”: 48.

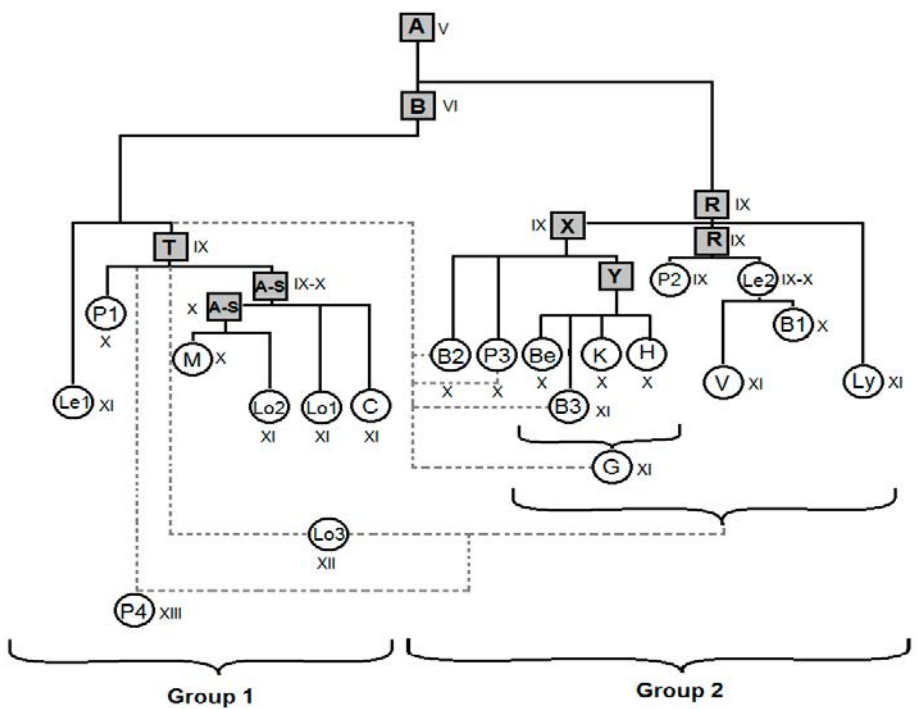


ILLUSTRATION 24. HELEN WOODRUFF’S STEMMA. FROM: WOODRUFF, HELEN. “THE ILLUSTRATED MANUSCRIPTS OF PRUDENTIUS...”: 50.